

8.07	-0.04	Sunair	4.00	-0.01
7.46	-0.04	SunriseSen	24.80	+0.66
12.53	-0.17	SunTrst	1.80	61.29
9.10	-0.09	Supvalu	57	23.40
32.70	-0.30	SykesEn	6.62	+0.94
26.76	-0.16	Symantec	46.76	-0.40
25.15		Synovus	59	23.52
35.15	+0.95	Sysco	44	30.28
31.42	-0.23	SystCpt		11.05
14.35	-0.30	TCW	18	4.44
33.44	-0.24	TECO	76	12.47
31.59	-0.09	TJX	14	19.27
37.94	-0.29	TXU Corp	50	19.86
8.78	-0.22	Target	28	36.23
50.20	-0.58	TelMexL	1.12	30.43
25.95	-0.74	Tellabs		6.31
11.27	-0.08	Tellula		4.50
34.80	-0.20	TempleInl	1.36	45.38
28.42	-0.34	TmpGib	48	7.98
30.06	-0.58	TncoAut		5.04
18.16	-0.55	TextInst	09	18.70
19.30	+0.40	Texttron	1.30	43.02
36.26	-0.08	Thornbg	2.48	27.70
51.26	-0.53	3Com		4.84
32.56	+0.40	3M Co	2.84	139.40
15.28	-0.19	ToyRU		11.12
18.88	+0.64	TrackData		1.50
49.40	+0.30	TrCda g	1.08	18.11
3.40	+0.02	Tredgar	16	15.46
16.83	+0.25	TrinityIn	24	22.53
52.00	+0.10	TycolntI	05	18.70
43.43	+0.04	UGI s	1.14	31.71
92.56	+0.16	vJUSG		15.09
1.14	-0.08	UniSrcEn	80	18.83
3.54	-0.02	UnionPac	92	59.97
34.74	-0.49	UPlnters	1.33	32.30
44.85	-0.45	UPInt pE	2.00	62.00
47.65	+0.06	Unisys		12.02
9.24	+0.06	UtdAuto		22.09
20.13	+0.32	UDelns		26.29
32.33	+0.08	UPS B	84	63.48
32.41	-0.07	UtdRntL		13.63
14.55	+0.25	US Bancorp	82	24.72
16.52	-0.25	US Enr		4.71
8.96	+0.03	USSteel	20	15.40
23.54	-0.10	UtdTech	1.08	76.40
73.11	-1.17	Unocal	80	29.32
15.80	+0.08	ValueCly		2.09
8.08	-0.04	Vectren	1.10	23.42
11.88	-0.34	Verhas		30.38
8.16	-0.34	VerizonCm	1.54	35.23
3.89	+0.09	Viacom	24	43.00
39.24	+0.29	ViacomB	24	42.77
25.30	+0.30	ViadCp	36	22.03
21.10	-0.18	Vishay		14.46
49.48	+0.04	Vitesse		6.39
28.40	+0.68	Vodafone	29	19.30
55.90	+0.27	Wabash		16.98
40.00	-0.38	Wachovia	1.40	43.47
19.30	-0.05	WalMart	36	55.90
17.80	-0.16	Walgrn	17	29.72
41.38	+0.08	WAMul	1.60	40.86
14.55	+0.15	WRIT	1.41	27.90
48.35	+0.35	WsteMinc	01	23.72
1.53	+0.06	WatsnPh		39.90
7.50	-0.18	WeinRit	2.34	43.90
10.85	-0.15	WeisMk	1.12	31.80
33.39	+0.82	Wellmn	36	9.63
41.85	-0.25	WellpHt		88.85
23.50	+0.18	WellsFigo	1.80	51.33
38.07	+0.35	Wendys	24	28.76
18.10	-1.85	WesterEn	78	16.71
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37.45	-0.47	Weyerh	1.80	58.50
67.59	+0.58	Whrpl	1.36	65.47
4.57	+0.02	WhiteElec		12.23
27.14	+0.37	WholeFd		52.45
78.30	-0.87	WmsCos	04	6.56
28.45	+0.90	WirelessT	08	2.53
4.25	+0.24	WireEn	80	27.88
64.49	+0.52	WcWW	22	18.97
22.80	+1.05	WridGate n		42
8.81	+0.12	Wrigley	88	55.01
87.75	+0.65	Wyah	92	45.95
41.08	-0.02	Wynn n		16.96
65.80	-0.38	XOMA		7.59
18	-0.17	XcelEngy	75	14.15
36.03	-0.37	XcelE pIA	3.60	57.00
22.08	+0.36	Xerox		10.96
7.40	-0.01	Xcor		8.70
37.34	-0.79	Xilinx		25.38
7.43	+0.15	Xybrnaut		73
13.71	-0.04	Yahoo		30.79
4.06	-0.15	YumBids		29.65
2.43	+0.08	Zimmer		47.84
7.35	+0.17	Zotek		2.73
35.10	-0.44	ZweigTI	58	5.14
14.13	+0.28			-0.22
18.05	-0.30			
30.65	-0.50			
6.00	-0.21			
40	-0.02			
38.15	-0.05			
31.22	+0.57			
4.97	+0.04			
18.17	+0.02			
13.74	+0.04			
23.99	+0.05			
4.24	+0.06			

WABASH VALLEY

A series of tributes to hometown heroes who have made a difference.

Artists (WV)

Gilbert Wilson



The spectacular murals on the walls of Woodrow Wilson Middle School are the product of Terre Haute artist Gilbert Brown Wilson, now recognized among America's premier mural painters.

Born March 4, 1907, at 1201 N. Fourth St., Gilbert was the son of former opera singer Martha Wilson and Wilton A. Wilson, a teller at Terre Haute National Bank who went on to become cashier and vice president when the bank became Terre Haute First National.

He was active in Boy Scouts through his days at McLean Junior High and Garfield High School, where he graduated in 1925. At Indiana State Normal, he came under the influence of William T. Turman, professor of art and an esteemed landscape painter.

Wilson enrolled at the Chicago Art Institute in 1928 and won his first two awards from the Chicago Hoosier Salon in 1929 and 1930. In Chicago he met muralist Eugene Savage and became Savage's apprentice at the Yale School of Fine Arts in New Haven, Conn. Impressed with murals by Diego Rivera and José Orozco, he journeyed to Mexico to study with Rivera and, later, Spanish sculptor Urbici Soler.

Returning to Terre Haute in 1933, Wilson agreed to paint four murals at Woodrow Wilson. The project consumed the better part of three years. Though praised for his works, Gilbert received no compensation except for a bag of coins collected by Woodrow Wilson students. He also painted a mural at the State Laboratory School on N. Seventh and another at the old science building at Indiana State Teachers College. Later he created murals at Antioch College, the Spink Hotel in Wawasee, the School of Sculpture in New York City, the Elks Memorial at the Lincoln Park building in Chicago, the School of Dance in Columbus, Ohio, and the Weldin Talley Memorial Playhouse in Terre Haute. The "Comedy and Tragedy" murals at the Community Theatre were commissioned in 1966 by Terre Haute philanthropist Benjamin Blumberg in memory of his wife, artist Fannie Burgheim Blumberg, one of several prominent students of Wilson's.

Though Wilson read Herman Melville's epic *Moby Dick* as a youth, he became totally absorbed by the novel upon rereading it in 1944 and devoted much of the rest of his life translating its messages to canvas. In 1955, 300 *Moby Dick* paintings by Wilson were incorporated into a 30-minute film produced by Jerry Winters and narrated by Thomas Mitchell, which won the Venice Film Festival Silver Reed Award. He also assisted movie director John Huston in the production of the 1956 film epic *Moby Dick*, starring Gregory Peck, and conducted a 52-city tour sponsored by the Melville Society and Warner Brothers to exhibit his art and the two films.

He wrote a 55-page libretto, which he envisioned would become the basis for an opera entitled *The White Whale*, but that dream was not realized before his death on Jan. 16, 1991, at the home of his sister Marjorie in Frankfort, Ky. Swope Art Museum of Terre Haute is the recognized national repository for Wilson's works (and memorabilia) which have received recent attention in *Unpainted to the Last: Moby Dick and Twentieth Century American Art* by Elizabeth A. Schultz, published in 1995, and the *Moby Dick* feature on the Discovery Channel's *Great Books* series.

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n.q.-not quoted, n.a.-not available.

Wilson, Gilbert
Terre Haute Tribune-Star
Thursday July 31, 2003
P49

George Krietenstein Portrait To Be Given To WV Boy Scouts

SEP 12 1975

ARTIST (J.H.)

(Community Affairs File)

Gilbert Wilson, Terre Haute artist, will present his portrait of the late George Krietenstein.

founder of the local Boy Scout Camp Krietenstein, to the Wabash Valley Scout Council during the Order of the Arrow Fall Fellowship this weekend at

the camp. Earl Brandt, Scout executive, said Wednesday the artist, who now lives in Frankfort, Ky., had a long association with Scouting in the Wabash Valley Council.

+ + +

"Mr. Krietenstein was Gilbert's idol" Brandt said, "and

he (Wilson) has just completed the portrait from memory. Gilbert will probably arrive Friday afternoon at the camp and the portrait will be presented during the dinner at 6 p.m. Saturday night in the camp dining hall."

Gilbert, who painted the murals at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School and those in the Community Theater, was an active Scoutmaster and served on the Camp "K" staff, Brandt noted.

He added that Camp Krietenstein was named in honor of the memory of the founder's son to whom it was dedicated. Literally "thousands of Scouts" benefitted from the founder's interest and generosity.

+ + +

The portrait, measuring two and one-half feet by four feet, will be placed in the Scout Service Center, 501 S. 25th St., the headquarters of the Council, a United Way agency.

Pre-registrations for the weekend now total more than 150 men and boys. In the course of the weekend, close to 100 Scouts selected or "lapped out" during the summer camping season for the Order will complete their "ordeal" or testing.

As a part of the "ordeal," participants will work on camp improvement projects such as helping with the work on the new shower house. They also will replace hasps and locks, fix broken windows and repair screens, all of which were damaged during recent vandalism at the camp, Brandt said.

The new members will be inducted Saturday night during colorful ceremonies when several Vigil honor awards will be presented to members of the Order who have given outstanding service during past years to the Order.

The program will begin at 6:30 p.m. Friday and end at 11 a.m. Sunday.

WILSON, GILBERT

WILSON GILBERT

TRIB STAR JANUARY 23, 1991

Gilbert Wilson

Gilbert Wilson, 83, of Versailles, Ky., and formerly of Terre Haute died Wednesday, Jan. 16, 1991, in Taylor Manor Nursing Home at Versailles. He was a retired artist and writer. He was born March 4, 1907, in Terre Haute to Wilton Albert Wilson and Martha Brown Wilson. Survivors include two sisters, Marjorie Marion Wilson of Frankfort, Ky., and Loyal Martin of Cincinnati, Ohio. There were no services. Cremation was scheduled. Duell-Clark Funeral Home at Versailles assisted with arrangements.

Murals • Continued from Page A1

Every race and both sexes are pictured in the murals, which also drew criticism, said Hill, who also teaches students the history of the murals.

"People thought women were to stay in the home," Hill said. "I believe he was sort of ahead of his time and believed in equality for everybody."

Wilson, regarded as one of three premier muralists at the time, contacted school officials about painting the murals in 1932. He completed them in 1935.

School janitors collected colored chalk for the artist, who did the work for free.

Students raised money for him and presented it at the unveiling, but Hill said Wilson kept the money until his death in 1991 in Frankfort, Ky.

In 1981, as the school began a \$9 million renovation, the murals were restored.

Art teacher Don Hadley was handpicked by Wilson to do the work. Hadley said he tried to use the same materials to match the murals as closely as possible.

Hadley spent the summer, sometimes working 12-hour shifts, restoring the murals to their original glory. The paint underneath had begun to chip and an inside gutter had begun to leak.

In addition to the murals, the school boasts a unique architectural style.

"We felt that this building was significant and needed to be recognized as the school district is looking at its other buildings and looking to do away with them," said Mark Dollase of the state Historic Landmarks Foundation.

When the school was origi-

Wilson's murals

The three murals — one on the south wall, one on the north and another above the stairwell to the west — covering the entryway to Woodrow Wilson are full of powerful images done in vibrant colors. Many of the faces were modeled after community leaders.

The mural on the south wall contains 18 images.

A young swimmer and an older fisherman symbolize how different generations can co-exist. A farmer staring off into the distance, the future, as he plows his fields.

Two research scientists looking for cures to diseases, while feeble hands reach out to them for help and well-dressed arms try to hold them back. A female scientist waves away money and blank checks from profiteers.

Two masked robber barons and a politician in tuxedos and top hats stand between rows of blue-collar workers, male and female, as the politician gives a speech.

Boy Scouts and 4-H members of all races cover the wall. Those same faces are seen in

four soldiers who point their bayonets at the green-faced men looking to profit from war. In the middle of the mural, an old man looks ahead.

A graveyard is covered in tombstones with Why carved into them, and a massive explosion with tiny dollar signs covers the bottom right-hand corner. A monument to the Boy Scouts covers the bottom left-hand corner.

The mural on the north wall has two mechanical serpents that symbolize how machinery is used for war.

A man with six arms stretches two of them to control breaking chains, representing technology. A third arm hoists a fist to the serpents, another holds a young man and yet another cradles a microscope. The last arm points to the future.

The mural above the stairwell has two large hands protecting a young seedling. The hands represent education, the seedling represents students.

nally built there was criticism that the school was too expensive, Dollase said. "Everyone thought it was too grand."

The foundation began work on the nomination in 1995, Dollase said. The school will receive a plaque today during its annual spring awards ceremony.

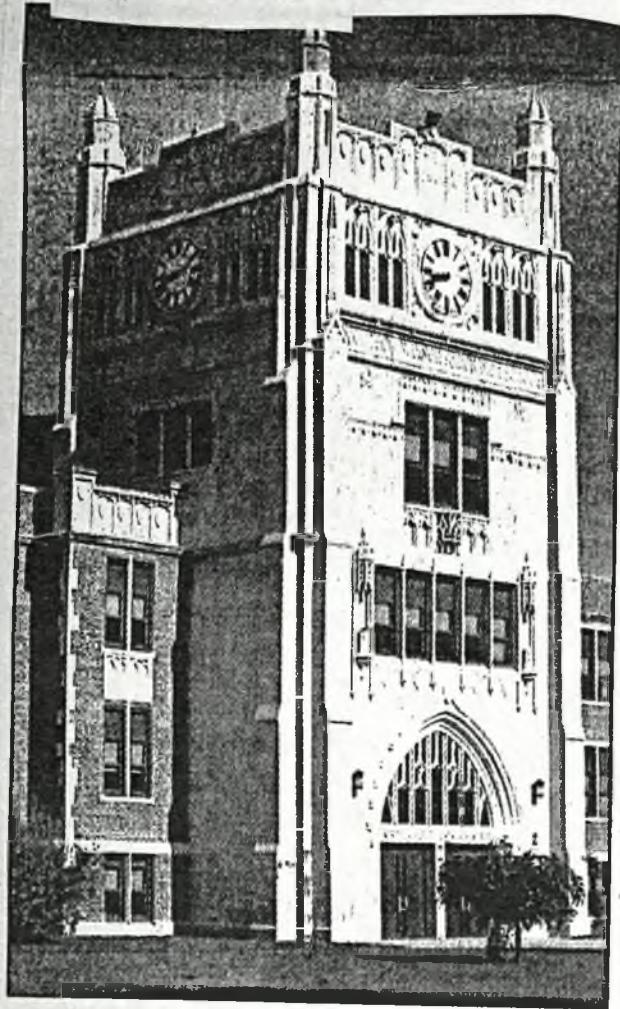
"We're very excited about it," said principal Sharon Pitts,

"and it definitely is an honor."

Woodrow Wilson, built in 1927, is the first Terre Haute school to receive such recognition.

"By putting this on the National Register it raises the importance and the significance in the minds of the public," Dollase said. "Twenty years from now, people will rally to keep it."

Once controversial, Wilson's provocative murals have been transformed into . . .



Tribune-Star/Jim Avels

Intricate entry: A tower built in 1926 entirely of smooth limestone (above left) welcomes visitors to Woodrow Wilson. There are four owl finials (top right) guarding the school in pairs on either side of the front entrance. The owls are symbols of knowledge. Etched in the tower are four elves representing geography (above right), writing, arithmetic and reading.

Timeless treasures

By Cindy Dobbs

Tribune-Star

Three colorful murals have dominated the entryway to Woodrow Wilson Middle School since 1935.

Those murals, drawn in chalk by Terre Haute native Gilbert Wilson, are among the reasons the 69-year-old school has been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Once seen as controversial because of their strong images, the murals carry messages about economics, environment, patriotism, politics and technology.

Gerald Shea, a former neighbor and friend of Wilson, described him as a man of vision, who saw the potential for people to misuse technology.

"He painted things as he saw

them," Shea said.

Wilson told Shea the murals had a hidden meaning that would be revealed in the times to come.

"I'm not saying he could foresee the future, but he was thinking about it," Shea said. "And if man didn't change his ways, that this would come about."

Despite pressure to redo the murals, Shea said, Wilson would not budge.

"Some of the things in the mural upset people," said Linda Hill, who teaches art at the middle school. "No school board members attended the unveiling [in 1935]."

But Hill says the images encourage students to think for themselves.

ARTIST DEFACES SCHOOL MURALS

Wilson Says He Was Not Satisfied
With the "Artistic Mes-
sage" Thereof.

Nov 24-36-
The destruction of the murals at the new Laboratory school by the artist, Gilbert Wilson, himself, has remained unexplained until this morning when Mr. Wilson, himself, told The Tribune that he felt that he had not accomplished what he had in mind when he painted the murals. "I know what I wish to express in the mural I started, but also believed that I had not accomplished what I set out to do and I felt that, rather than deliberate so long over the mural, I should destroy it."

"There is an impulse in art and while I regret that I did destroy the work, after all it is clearly a personal matter and any expense attendant to place the walls back I expect to take care of in a few days," stated Mr. Wilson.

Olin Jamison, principal of the school, states that he was completely at sea what had caused the destruction of the murals. "When we came into the building on Saturday morning, after having been away at a school meeting on Friday, the murals were defaced and we could not understand what had happened."

"I went to my office and found a note on my door, signed by Wilson, and asking me not to ask for an explanation."

"So far as I know no criticism of the work had been given, and the murals in so far as they were finished, for they were not yet completed, had been accepted by the college, and the destroying of them is unexplainable by me."

J. W. Jones, dean of men of Indiana State Teachers college, stated to The Tribune this morning: "The college has endeavored to encourage a local artist and this action with no explanation is a great disappointment. I wish to say, however, that we appreciate the attitude of W. A. Wilson, the artist's father, in restoring the walls to their original state, which he has said he will do."

Just what action may be taken by the school for the act of vandalism is not known. Wilson had a key to the building provided him, so he might paint after school hours, and he used that for entrance into the building when he rubbed out the murals, which were done in chalk.

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ENCOURAGE GILBERT WILSON IN HIS MURAL PAINTING

Fred J. Ringel, a writer for Scribner's magazine, and Bernice Abbott, a noted New York photographer, are here to do an article for the magazine on the murals painted at Woodrow Wilson high school and the Laboratory school by Gilbert Wilson, Terre Haute artist.

Ringel was much interested when he heard that the artist a few weeks ago brushed off the walls of the Laboratory school one of his own murals, and explained to the school authorities that the mural "did not express the message he wished to convey."

Miss Abbott and Mr. Ringel were tremendously impressed with Wilson's genius so forcefully to depict the social problems of our time. They expressed their belief that Wilson will count among the three or four greatest mural painters of our age before he reaches 32.

School officials say there has been no opposition to Wilson painting his murals and that he has been encouraged here in every way possible in his effort to win a Guggenheim scholarship. *End*

Tribune
Dec. 20-36

VIGO CH

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Community Affairs File

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Gilbert Wilson Has Busy Life

T.H. Star 9/2/65

As Artist, Writer and Speaker

T.H. ART + ARTISTS

BY FRANCES E. HUGHES

Now that Gilbert Wilson, Terre Haute and Frankfort, Ky., artist, is spending more time in Terre Haute after an absence of about 10 years, he is becoming a very busy man.

For he has become popular as a lecturer for local clubs and civic organizations as well as being a talented artist, sculptor and writer.

Last year, he was the speaker on "Why Is An Artist?" before the Women's Division of the Sheldon Swope Art Gallery. He will speak again before that group on Nov. 19 on "Psychology of the Creative Urge."

On Tuesday, Sept. 28, he will be the speaker for the meeting of the art department of the Woman's Department Club at the Allendale Lodge of Indiana State College. His subject will be "Moby Dick As a Music Drama."

+ + +

Recently he spoke on "Old Mister World," showing a part of a film he is making, for the Optimist Club of Frankfort, Ky.

Too, he is painting, as he has for many years; doing some sculpture, working on a book about Terre Haute, writing, illustrating and making a film of a modern fable, "Old Mister World;" making pictorial maps for the state of Kentucky, and assisting Ben Blumberg in planning and putting together the second edition of the Late Fannie Burghelm Blumberg's creative work.

With one of his latest oil paintings, "CORE," he won a blue ribbon and champion award in the oil painting class at the recent Wabash Valley Fair.

+ + +

He is making two sculpture plaques for the Heldenentor Foundation. One is of Lawrence Melchoir's "Tristan" and the other of Kirsten Flagstad as "Isolde." These will be cast in metal to be sold as wall plaques for the benefit of the foundation.

His writing includes a book about Terre Haute called "High Earth." It is a series of short stories patterned after Drieser's "Twelve men" and Sherwood Anderson's "Winesburg, Ohio."

Wilson's modern fable, "Old Mister World and the Hue-Mans," about the earth and the atom is well on its way. He is writing and illustrating it, using drawings of Marion "Tiny" Shearer of Telka Farms, west of Danville, who weighs more than 300 pounds, as "Old Mister World." He also has started to make a film of the fable, using sculptures as well as paintings for illustrations.

+ + +

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His friendship with Shearer also led him into another venture. He and the farmer, who was named Corn King of the World in 1961 at the International Agriculture Exposition in Montreal, Canada, have tried growing corn to music. Wilson had previously tried the experiment on tobacco in Kentucky.

Music is played to the crop at dawn each morning on the theory that plants grow with sunlight which acts on the chlorophyll in a process called photosynthesis, which subsides when the sun goes down. The musical vibration at dawn gets the plant up earlier in the morning by stimulating the protoplasm which starts the photosynthesis working sooner.

The two men report that the crops grown to music are much better and faster growing.

+ + +

For three months out of the year, Wilson works on pictorial maps for the state of Kentucky. He is just finishing his third map, this one on major parkways. He has a contract for one more after that.

He also is putting in much time with Blumberg on the second edition of Mrs. Blumberg's creative work. The first book dealt with her writing and painting. This one will be mostly on her painting and her unpublished manuscripts. While the first was a children's book, published in 1963, this will be an adult book with a few children's stories. There will be many reproductions of her paintings, some in color.

Wilson previously produced a movie on the story of "Moby Dick," which won a Silver Reel Award, Cinema 16, in 1957. At the same time, he worked with John Huston on the film of "Moby Dick" and toured the country with his paintings used in producing the film.

Wilson, a graduate of Garfield High School, attended Chicago Art Institute and the Yale School of Fine Arts. He also worked as an apprentice to Eugene Savage, another Hoosier artist, and with Diego Rivers in Mexico.

In 1935, he painted murals at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, and the next year, under the patronage of Mr. and Mrs. Blumberg, made pastel murals at the Laboratory School of Indiana State University. From 1948 to 1961, he lived in New York most of the time.

Wilson, Gilbert

Indianapolis STAR JUV. Magazine Aug. 15, 1965

GROWING WITH THE CLASSICS

By FRANCES E. HUGHES



A SYMPHONY in a corn field! A full Dominican choir and *Ave Maria* in a tobacco patch! Shostakovich in a pasture!

Crazy? Well, maybe it sounds that way. But a Kentucky artist with roots in Indiana, and a Hoosier farmer, who have formed a firm alliance, believe in their bones that plants "listen" and react to music, and that plant growth is stimulated by regular concerts.

The strange theory occurred first to the artist, Gilbert Wilson, who has a studio five miles east of Frankfort, Ky., and another studio on the Ben Blumberg estate at Terre Haute. He tried it out.

In co-operation with some Kentucky farmers near Frankfort, Ky., he tried playing classical music over

a loud speaker on a small field of tobacco in the summer of 1963. He got the largest crop he had ever had in his 12 years on the farm. He had never had as much as 4,000 pounds in any year, but in 1963 he had 5,000 pounds of tobacco.

The Hoosier farmer is Marion (Tiny) Shearer, who operates Telka Farms west of Danville. "Tiny" was named Corn King of the World in 1961 at the International Agricultural Exposition in Montreal, Canada. He had had second place preceding his first place award, and since then has placed second twice in the world-wide corn growing contest.

"TINY," WHO weighs more than 300 pounds, had agreed to be model for an art project of Wilson's. In

the summer of 1962, Wilson went to the Danville farm to make photographs and sketches. Shearer fell for the artist's unconventional theory to the point of dedicating some corn land to the idea.

Two four-acre plots were planted far apart. Both were fertilized and worked the same. The "field of music" had been farmed for 35 years and could not be expected to yield as much as the other which had been in use only 10.

Each morning at dawn for one-half hour, five days a week for six weeks, Wilson carried his hi-fi to his corn field symphony hall. Shostakovich symphonies and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir records were used most.

Final yield of the "musical plot" beat the other by 103 to 86 bushels per acre.

Now Wilson is trying music on

grass in experimental indoor plantings. The box of grass to which music has been played is at least one week ahead in germination and 1½ inches taller than the grass which sprouted and grew in silence.

Dr. A. J. Ohlrogge, head of the agronomy department of Purdue University's School of Agriculture, is somewhat noncommittal, but says he is "interested" and is trying to find a student who will perform some laboratory-controlled experiments.

WILSON GOT some of his ideas from correspondence with Dr. T.C.N. Singh of India, who started similar experiments in 1950. Dr. Singh thinks the plants respond best to sounds of the human voice in high register.

Wilson's explanation for the response of growing plants to music: Plants grow by the action of direct sunlight upon chlorophyll (the green

coloring matter in plants) in a process known as photosynthesis, which ceases at dusk. Musical vibrations "get the plant up earlier" in the morning by stimulating protoplasm in the chlorophyll, and speeding up the photosynthesis. Wilson as yet doesn't know if rhythm may play a part. He hasn't tried jazz, swing, or rock-and-roll.

The unusual friendship of the two Hoosiers which eventually led to the musical experiments began when Wilson saw Shearer on a television program *To Tell The Truth*, shortly after the farmer was named Corn King.

For an illustrated fable he is writing, Wilson sought a large man with a face showing both kindness and humor as a model. He decided Shearer was just the man he was looking for. He wrote to the network,

and his letter was forwarded to Shearer. The novel idea of posing appealed to "Tiny."

His fame as Corn King of the World was earned by his skill and experience as an Indiana dirt farmer, and he is well-known at the Indiana State Fair, where he is in charge of the cattle barns each year.

Community Affairs File

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SHEARER'S HUGE frame takes the role of "Old Mister World," in Wilson's modern fable *Old Mister World and the Hue-Mans*, which deals with man's destiny in an atomic world. The fable is well on its way, Wilson reports, and he hopes to make a film of it. Some of the illustrations are in sculpture.

Shearer has never fostered an interest in art, but he likes Wilson's preliminary work and shares Wilson's love of good music and nature. He looks forward to final days of the

fable, and Wilson has promised Shearer's two daughters casts of the sculptured head of their father.

Tiny attended Purdue for three years and the University of Kentucky for a year. His father had a farm near Indianapolis for a number of years, and, as the city expanded, Shearer sold out and moved closer to what he considered the farmland of the country.

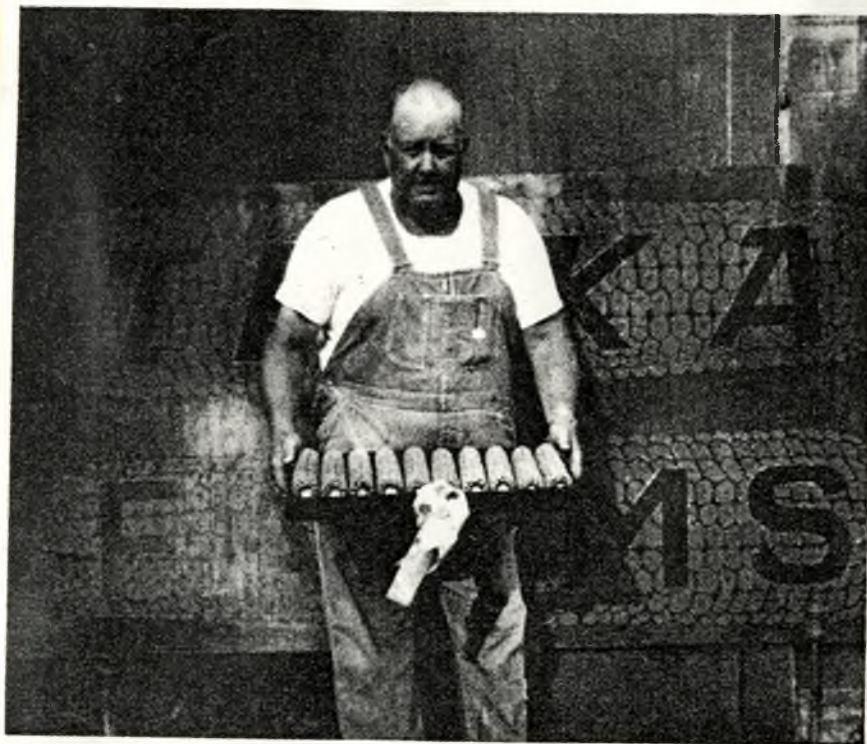
Wilson was graduated from Garfield High School, Terre Haute, and attended the Chicago Art Institute. He studied also under Eugene Savage, another Hoosier, at the Yale School of Fine Arts for a year, then worked for a year as Savage's apprentice in the Westchester County studios.

Also he worked with Diego Rivera in designing murals in Mexico during 1929. Wilson has painted murals at Wilson Junior High School, Terre Haute; some king-sized ones at the Laboratory School of Indiana State University, others at Antioch College, Yellow Springs, O., and Lake Wawasee.

He lived in the Blumberg Terre Haute studio for three years and considers it his second home. Wilson is a frequent prize winner in art and sculpture, receiving the Beaux Arts Medal at Yale for a project mural.

The idea of applying music to plant growth by now has become an avocation.

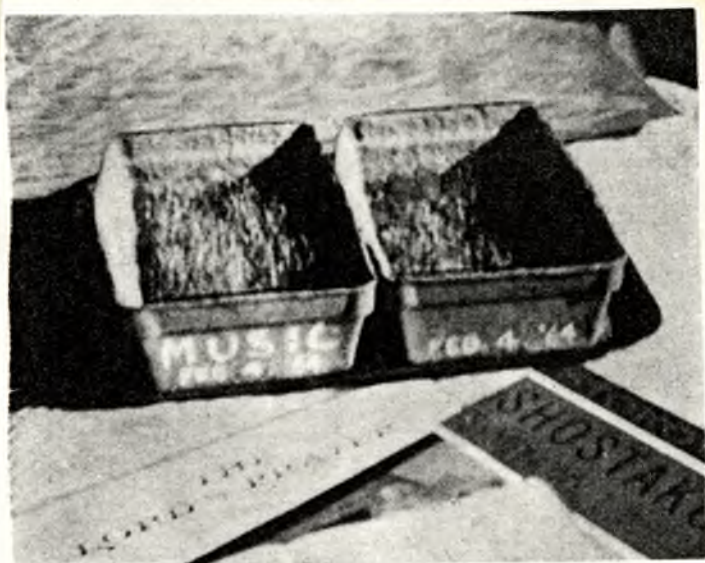
THERE IS NO money in it thus far, but who knows what may develop from this collaboration between a sensitive Hoosier artist and an Indiana dirt farmer.



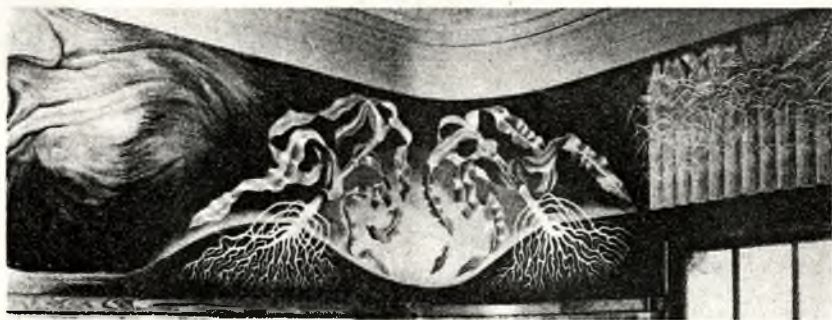
This is Marion (Tiny) Shearer, near Danville, and his 10 best ears of corn when he won the title of Corn King of the World for the year 1961.



Artist Gilbert Wilson looking at his sculpture of "Tiny" Shearer. In background is the painting, *Old Mister World*, to be used in the fable.



Grass on the left ($1\frac{1}{2}$ inches taller) was grown to music of Shostakovich and *The Lord's Prayer*; on the right, without.



Wilson painted this panel in 1936 as part of huge pastel murals for the Laboratory School of Indiana State University at Terre Haute.



SHOWS MODELS OF SUGGESTED CENTER—Drawings and models depicting a new cultural center being considered for Terre Haute were explained by local artist Gilbert Wilson, center, at a public meeting Tuesday night sponsored by the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce. From left are Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Blumberg, Wilson, Chamber President John Lamb and Carl Bauermeister. Photo by Martin.

Cultural Center Plans Outlined

Wilson, Gilbert
T.H. Trib. 11/18/67

Possible plans for a new cultural center here were presented by local artist Gilbert Wilson at a Tuesday afternoon meeting sponsored by the Terre Haute Chamber of Commerce.

Some 25 Terre Hauteans heard Wilson discuss his dream of a cultural center for the city which would include an art gallery, a restaurant and an auditorium to seat 3,000 to 5,000 persons.

The structure would carry out the center's theme of Indian lore, said Wilson, in that they would be round and built one on top of the other in the shape of a wedding cake and would be decorated as Indian drums.

No financial estimate was given. Wilson said that cost estimates would come later, after the idea had been accepted. It was suggested, however, that the federal government, charitable art foundations and local donors will play a strong part in financing.

Wilson foresaw the use of area products in the center, such as ceramic tile from Brazil and Indiana limestone. A 150-foot contemporary totem pole would be constructed of steel, with an elevator possibly located inside to give visitors a view of the Wabash Valley.

Wilson stressed the connection of Indiana and Indians and suggested the center also could serve as a center of Indian collections, as well as follow an Indian motif in physical appearance.

Avenue. Lamb pointed out it should be easily accessible to the Indiana State University campus.

Colby Uhler, executive director of the Department of Redevelopment, said it was possible some provisions for location could be made in the Community Center Urban Renewal Project.

Among other points discussed was the tourism potential which Richard Tuttle, administrative aide of the Chamber, termed "tremendous." It was pointed out such a facility could also be used for conventions and conferences, as well as cultural events.

Community Affairs File

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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Meet Gilbert Wilson

Native Artist To Be Honored By T.H. School

T-S 217 MAY 76
By HOWARD STEVENS
Tribune State Editor

"As Gil Wilson, I reckon, I am not important. But as an artist — or simply as a person — shaken and hurt and alarmed by forces which have reached even into my obscurity, then I am important, just as anyone is."

Those were the words of artist-writer Gilbert Wilson in the 1930s as he penned an introduction to his book — "Letters of William Allen White and a Young Man." Published by the John Day Co., of New York in 1948, Wilson dedicated his book to Dr. Walter H. DeMott, "who has seen a struggling artist through the lean years of becoming a writer," the author writes.

Wilson, a native of Terre Haute who now lives at Frankfort, Ky., will be honored May 2 at the 50th anniversary of Woodrow Wilson Junior High School. Three of Wilson's award-winning murals cover the entry walls of the school named after President Woodrow Wilson.

How did Wilson and the famous Kansas newspaperman get together? Wilson explains how the nine-year letter exchange started in his book.

"When talk arose of having the murals destroyed, I found it difficult to take. I could not understand the hostility, or the accusation that I was linked with subversive elements. It was charged that I had been 'subsidized' and 'supported.' I was wholly unaware that I had inadvertently painted a 'radical salute.'"

Ironically, teachers and students took up a collection for Wilson when he finished. It amounted to \$28.35 and he still has it. A janitor gave him much of the chalk.

Over the years, White wrote a series of letters to friends supporting the young artist. Attention came from the New Republic, Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, Scribner's Magazine, Theodore Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson.

But, Wilson was still having his troubles with the murals. He wrote White.

"Instead of winning acclaim, I only got into trouble. Because I chose to try to express what I felt in the conflict and disruption of things around me, certain factions found reason for objection," he wrote.

What really caused concern were a couple of quotations and inscriptions Wilson added to his murals. One had been assumed that they belonged to Eugene Debs. Wilson set the record straight.

"One quotation is carried on the Indiana state flag while the other was from a speech by Abraham Lincoln," Wilson wrote. The school board had flags hung over both inscriptions and Wilson was furious.

"I added two more inscriptions, one above each flag. One was from a speech by Woodrow Wilson for whom the school was named." While he was at it, Wilson put in a few lines of his own.

During this period, Wilson took long walks and at one point, contemplated taking his own life. He also got mad.

"I slept on the scaffolding at night. I ate apples to keep me going. I put everything I had into the murals," he wrote.

In a letter to White on March 12, 1937, Wilson described how he felt and what he did.

"I suddenly got mad and lost hold. I went to the janitor's closet and got an oil mop and smeared out my murals representing nine solid months of work. I took a long walk to the Wabash River bridge and thought of suicide. Instead, I went back to Woodrow Wilson and tried to destroy what was left.

"Luckily, they were too big and too high. I could only smear the lower section. I was too worn out to do much damage. Finally, I fell down and cried like a baby."

At White's death in 1944, Wilson wrote him a final letter. It closed with a P.S.

"It seems to me that a man is a radical not so much from choice as from pressures put upon him. If I am a radical, at least I must confess: because of you I am a gentler one."

Wilson's murals are also on the walls of State High, Spink-Wawasee Hotel, Lake Wawasee, Ind., Antioch College, Yellow Springs, Ohio. His paintings have also been shown in Chicago and New York.

Community Affairs File

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New County Public Library

6. of 6



4. of 6
By LIZ CIANCONE
Staff Writer

All Gil Wilson wanted to do was win a little recognition for his work. But, instead of bowing for accolades, he was humbled by harsh criticism.

That was nearly 50 years ago.

Now his work has taken a modestly prominent place in the community's heritage.

Wilson's legacy is conveyed through powerful messages created in murals on foyer walls at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, University School and at Community Theatre.

His deep commitment to peace, freedom and brotherhood led him to create "intentionally agitating", thought-provoking murals. Accomplishing his intended goal brought him unfavorable standing with local citizens.

"I had 'dreams' of doing such a forceful thing there on the walls of the junior high school that the people would rise up with great applause and put at my command all the wall space I could desire. Instead of winning acclaim, I only got into trouble. Because I chose to try to express what I felt in the conflict and the disruption of things around me, certain factions found reason for objection," Wilson said.

Many saw his artistic efforts as inflammatory and controversial, given the context of the time. In the spring of 1935, shortly before Wilson's murals were to be dedicated, Terre Haute was hit with a general labor strike. Ugly confrontations took center stage, and martial law was maintained in Terre Haute for more than six months.

Against that background and subsequent social polarization, consider the quotation Wilson emblazoned on his mural:

"Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness — that when any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government."

Criticism and efforts to destroy the murals aside, the creations survived time's rigid test, but not without scars. The years and the elements were not particularly kind.

When building renovation began in 1981, school corporation officials opted to restore the murals but who could undertake the task?

Many years ago Wilson had been impressed by a young artist's work. He asked that if at any time it was decided to restore and preserve his murals, Don Hadley, an art teacher at the school, should be the artist chosen to do the work.

The murals were covered carefully with plastic during the early phases of building renovation. Construction dust was not permitted to touch the murals and cause further damage.

Hadley could not begin restoration until June 22 of this year. He was able to complete only the north wall before school began this fall. He expects to work on the south wall next summer when the halls are again empty of students and the scaffolding can assume a semi-permanent position in the entry.

Wilson recently returned to Terre Haute to look at the restoration. Hadley, somewhat apprehensive, led the artist to the "Machinery Mural." Any artist who restores another's work can only hope it will meet the creator's vision and standards.

Wilson was delighted. He is reported to have said, "This is the way I hoped they would look." He was so pleased that he gave Hadley the ultimate accolade — he resigned the murals.

Hadley had to sift through conflicting advice

before he began work. His art mentor, Prof. John Laska, said the mural on the south wall was in the worst condition. The construction crew said the north wall was worse.

The north wall had suffered some water

damage and there was some sort of stain. The water damage was attributed to drainage conduits behind the wall — now rerouted — but the stain was unidentifiable. Hadley found it necessary to scrape the surface at that spot, get to the original wall and apply a sealer so the stain would not bleed through the new pastels.

Wilson's murals had been applied over paint. His work was durable. The paint was not. And, as the paint flaked, the pastels came with it.

Wilson had worked from about 2 p.m. until midnight or later. Hadley developed much the same schedule. Both found they lost as much as two hours work talking to people who stopped to watch the progress if they worked daylight hours.

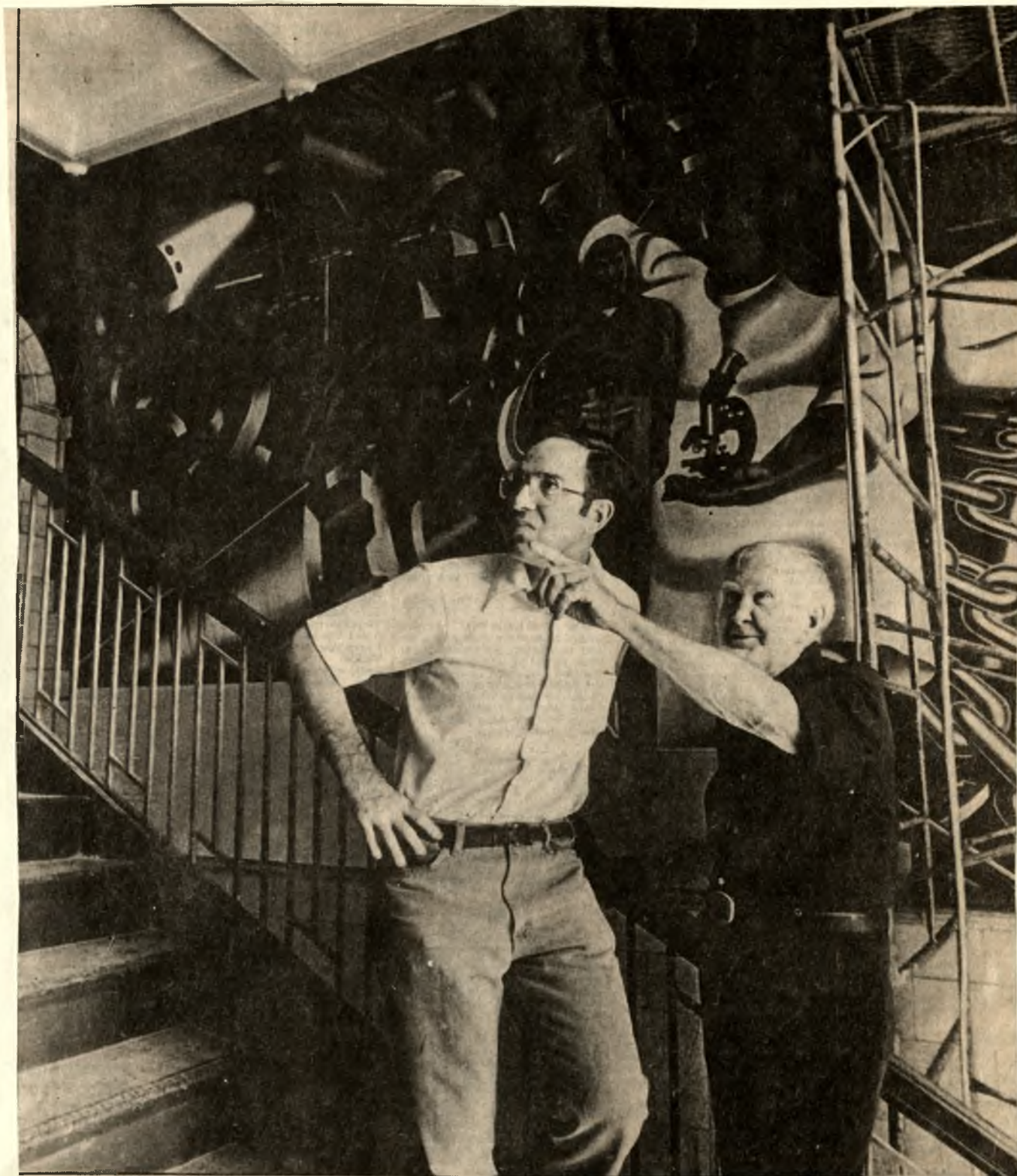
Hadley is using a detailed set of pictures to aid him in the restoration. The original colors of the murals have faded, so the same color now cannot be blended successfully with the old work which is retained. Hadley must select an "aged" pastel to achieve the proper effect.

Wilson knows all too well what Hadley is going through. There is a slim volume, "Letters of William Allen White and a Young Man," by Wilson in the school library. In it he speaks of the agony and the ecstasy of creation:

"I drew with charcoal, dusting it off to dimness, and then worked over the drawing with the colored chalks and pastels, rubbing the dry color in with my fingers. My 10 fingers virtually became my brushes with which I 'painted.' The walls had a fine-rough finish, so that in time my fingers got tender and sore and sometimes bled. The constant rubbing seemed to remove the callouses as fast as they formed — nor could I find any substitute which would work quite like the finger tips. I became able to use both hands, letting the fingers of one hand heal while I used the other."

Hadley is encountering some of the same problems. "The fingers are still the best brushes," he says. But the walls do have an

**Tender, sore
bleeding fingers
didn't stop
Gil Wilson from
becoming
"helplessly impelled
in a wonderful
dream." Now
Don Hadley
is restoring
that dream.**



At upper left, a youthful Gilbert Wilson poses for a photographer. But his breaks were infrequent. Most of his time was spent adding his delicate touch to eye-catching murals at Woodrow Wilson Junior high school. At lower left, Wilson puts the finishing touch on one of his creations. Above, the now aged Wilson discusses technique with Don Hadley, the artist challenged with restoring the unusual visuals.

extremely rough surface and the summer's work has left his finger tips sore and bleeding.

Hadley has an additional problem. He is righthanded. Wilson is lefthanded. Hadley must try to duplicate the original artist's stroke to achieve the proper blending.

Wilson has written of his work, "It was like being helplessly impelled in a wonderful dream — working away over the large area with the tiny sticks of color. It was a joy mingled with pain. It hurt to have the chalk or pastel break and fall to the floor and shatter — especially when it was a particular color you didn't have much of. But when one color ran out, I simply used some other color. I came to rely pretty heavily on white chalk. This I could get plenty of, because the friendly old janitor at the school would gather it up from the blackboard ledges in the classrooms he cleaned each day and save it for me."

Hadley says he experiences the same hurt and frustration when a stick of color falls from the tall scaffold and shatters on the floor. Unlike Wilson, however, Hadley has a materials budget. He buys "the highest quality material I can" so the work will last. Wilson worked without a budget and without payment, so for him the loss of chalk was a financial crisis as well as an emotional one.

The murals

A portrait gallery of local history would be a good description for the Woodrow Wilson murals.

Dr. Fred Donaghy whose name has been revived to christen the annual campus spruce-up at Indiana State University, is pictured as the kindly scientist who dominates the north-wall mural. He also is among five individuals to whom artist Gilbert Wilson dedicated his murals.

One of Donaghy's six massive arms protectively circles a young man.

The brooding threat of the north-wall machinery, held at bay only by the experienced research scientist and the hope of youth, is in contrast to the south wall which is a montage of humanists in local history.

William Turman, former chairman of ISU's art department, is remembered through the Turman Art Gallery. An early mentor of the muralist, Turman is the central figure on the south-wall mural.

The minister, popularly supposed to be the evangelist Billy Sunday, is in fact the Rev. Francis, a local minister who lost his pulpit because of his outspoken support of the city's general strike in 1935.

George Krietenstein is remembered as the scoutmaster with a troop of scouts united in brotherhood and pictured at the lower right of the mural. Mr. Ford, the school janitor who saved chalk for Wilson, is the farmer who surveys his well-turned field in tribute to the janitor's real ambition to return to the soil.

A portrait of Miss Dawson, a teacher affectionately remembered, is worked into the wall along with a portrait of the artist's sister who is pictured as a scientist spurning the offer of money for an invention which would benefit war industries.

It is thought that the dreamy young man at the upper right of the south-wall mural is Wilson, but he denies this. Still it is supposed that among the many figures and the 18 interwoven motifs of this wall exists a self-portrait.



Wilson, Gilbert

Muralist Wilson, editor White became like-minded pen pals

IS JUL 20 1986

As Gil Wilson, I reckon, I am not important. But as an artist — or simply as a person — shaken and hurt and alarmed by forces which have reached even into my obscurity, then I am important, just as anyone is. — "Letters of William Allen White and a Young Man"

Gil Wilson, the man responsible for epic murals in Woodrow Wilson Junior High School, University School and Community Theatre, wrote those lines in 1948.

The volume consists of an exchange of letters between the Terre Haute muralist and the famed editor of The Emporia Gazette, Emporia, Kan. For those of us too young to know the significance of this great journalist, suffice it to say that it was his editorials which helped sweep William McKinley into office, such was the power of the man's words and opinions during his lifetime.

Wilson, who is living out his years in a nursing home near Louisville, Ky., wrote that he believed White saw fit to answer his first letter, "and continued to correspond through the last nine years of his busy life [because] he saw in my experience what is likely inevitable with every young person today — that our generation is being driven either to distraction or else to revolt. How can we be expected to accept a world or way of life which has given us two world wars and an atom bomb?"

He explained how he returned to

Wake-up call



By Susan J. Kaufman

A veteran newswoman, Kaufman writes here each Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday about life and those who live it in the Wabash Valley.

"high earth," as he described Terre Haute, after busing dishes in a Chicago cafeteria to pay for his art education, and found "this wonderful wall. I would go day after day to that wall and sit on the stairway and look longingly at the huge, bare, clean, hungry space. And I'd quietly curse all the obstacles that stood in the way of my going to work on that wall."

His idea for the wall sprang out of a day spent at Columbian Enameling and Stamping Mill. He confessed to his journal May 8, 1933, that he was overwhelmed by the machinery — the huge stamping presses. "I came to feel a foreboding toward the way machines have been allowed to run away with men. I have seen a worker bound with wristbands fastened to the machine, presumably to protect his hands from being wrongly inserted

beneath the ton-like champing jaws — and there he 'works' while, I stand open-mouthed — watching him 'operate' — virtually a part of the mechanism."

The idea flooded Woodrow Wilson Junior High School's wall as the "Machinery Mural"; segments of the community rebelled.

"I could not understand the hostility, or the accusation that I was linked with 'subversive elements.' Crestfallen and a bit tired, I spent the next afternoon in the public library. Purely by chance I came upon an article by William Allen White, where he voiced the fact that he was disturbed over the 'perilous drift of American affairs in the midst of depression.' So clutching at the hope that he might understand my plight, I wrote him a long letter . . .

White answered Wilson within a week. "What I know about art you can put in your eye. But what I know about the struggle you are making, what I feel about your courage and your wisdom, I think encompasses all that I know and would like to be."

The exchange of letters between the Terre Haute artist and Kansas editor represent an incredible dialogue of social and class struggle of the times.

That the dialogue of half a century ago still provides grist today is both sad and true. White's death in January 1944 stilled one voice, but Wilson's murals and White's written words live on.

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Community Affairs File

Wilson, Gilbert

Thursday, June 6, 1996



Tribune-Star/Jim Avelis

Well-known work: Gilbert Wilson drew this mural at Woodrow Wilson School between 1934 and 1935.

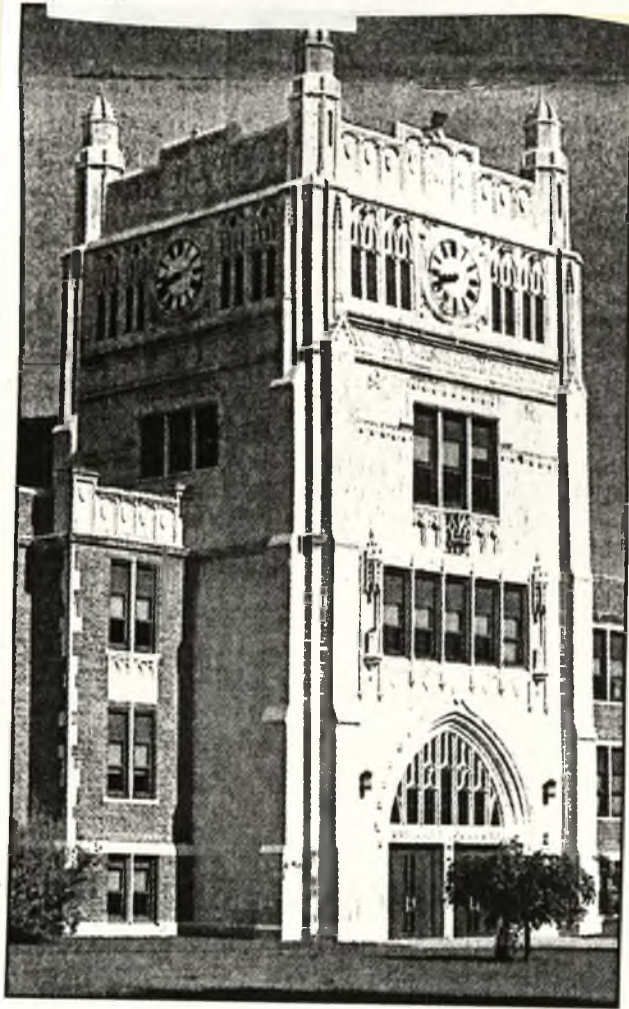
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TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

Once controversial, Wilson's provocative murals have been transformed into . . .



Tribune-Star/Jim Avella

Intricate entry: A tower built in 1926 entirely of smooth limestone (above left) welcomes visitors to Woodrow Wilson. There are four owl finials (top right) guarding the school in pairs on either side of the front entrance. The owls are symbols of knowledge. Etched in the tower are four elves representing geography (above right), writing, arithmetic and reading.

Timeless treasures

By Cindy Dobbs

Tribune-Star

Three colorful murals have dominated the entryway to Woodrow Wilson Middle School since 1935.

Those murals, drawn in chalk by Terre Haute native Gilbert Wilson, are among the reasons the 69-year-old school has been added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Once seen as controversial because of their strong images, the murals carry messages about economics, environment, patriotism, politics and technology.

Gerald Shea, a former neighbor and friend of Wilson, described him as a man of vision, who saw the potential for people to misuse technology.

"He painted things as he saw

them," Shea said.

Wilson told Shea the murals had a hidden meaning that would be revealed in the times to come.

"I'm not saying he could foresee the future, but he was thinking about it," Shea said. "And if man didn't change his ways, that this would come about."

Despite pressure to redo the murals, Shea said, Wilson would not budge.

"Some of the things in the mural upset people," said Linda Hill, who teaches art at the middle school. "No school board members attended the unveiling [in 1935]."

But Hill says the images encourage students to think for themselves.

Murals • Continued from Page A1

Every race and both sexes are pictured in the murals, which also drew criticism, said Hill, who also teaches students the history of the murals.

"People thought women were to stay in the home," Hill said. "I believe he was sort of ahead of his time and believed in equality for everybody."

Wilson, regarded as one of three premier muralists at the time, contacted school officials about painting the murals in 1932. He completed them in 1935.

School janitors collected colored chalk for the artist, who did the work for free.

Students raised money for him and presented it at the unveiling, but Hill said Wilson kept the money until his death in 1991 in Frankfort, Ky.

In 1981, as the school began a \$9 million renovation, the murals were restored.

Art teacher Don Hadley was handpicked by Wilson to do the work. Hadley said he tried to use the same materials to match the murals as closely as possible.

Hadley spent the summer, sometimes working 12-hour shifts, restoring the murals to their original glory. The paint underneath had begun to chip and an inside gutter had begun to leak.

In addition to the murals, the school boasts a unique architectural style.

"We felt that this building was significant and needed to be recognized as the school district is looking at its other buildings and looking to do away with them," said Mark Dollase of the state Historic Landmarks Foundation.

When the school was origi-

Wilson's murals

The three murals — one on the south wall, one on the north and another above the stairwell to the west — covering the entryway to Woodrow Wilson are full of powerful images done in vibrant colors. Many of the faces were modeled after community leaders.

The mural on the south wall contains 18 images.

A young swimmer and an older fisherman symbolize how different generations can co-exist. A farmer staring off into the distance, the future, as he plows his fields.

Two research scientists looking for cures to diseases, while feeble hands reach out to them for help and well-dressed arms try to hold them back. A female scientist waves away money and blank checks from profiteers.

Two masked robber barons and a politician in tuxedos and top hats stand between rows of blue-collar workers, male and female, as the politician gives a speech.

Boy Scouts and 4-H members of all races cover the wall. Those same faces are seen in

four soldiers who point their bayonets at the green-faced men looking to profit from war. In the middle of the mural, an old man looks ahead.

A graveyard is covered in tombstones with Why carved into them, and a massive explosion with tiny dollar signs covers the bottom right-hand corner. A monument to the Boy Scouts covers the bottom left-hand corner.

The mural on the north wall has two mechanical serpents that symbolize how machinery is used for war.

A man with six arms stretches two of them to control breaking chains, representing technology. A third arm hoists a fist to the serpents, another holds a young man and yet another cradles a microscope. The last arm points to the future.

The mural above the stairwell has two large hands protecting a young seedling. The hands represent education, the seedling represents students.

nally built there was criticism that the school was too expensive, Dollase said. "Everyone thought it was too grand."

The foundation began work on the nomination in 1995, Dollase said. The school will receive a plaque today during its annual spring awards ceremony.

"We're very excited about it," said principal Sharon Pitts,

"and it definitely is an honor."

Woodrow Wilson, built in 1927, is the first Terre Haute school to receive such recognition.

"By putting this on the National Register it raises the importance and the significance in the minds of the public," Dollase said. "Twenty years from now, people will rally to keep it."

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TRACES

of Indiana and Midwestern History

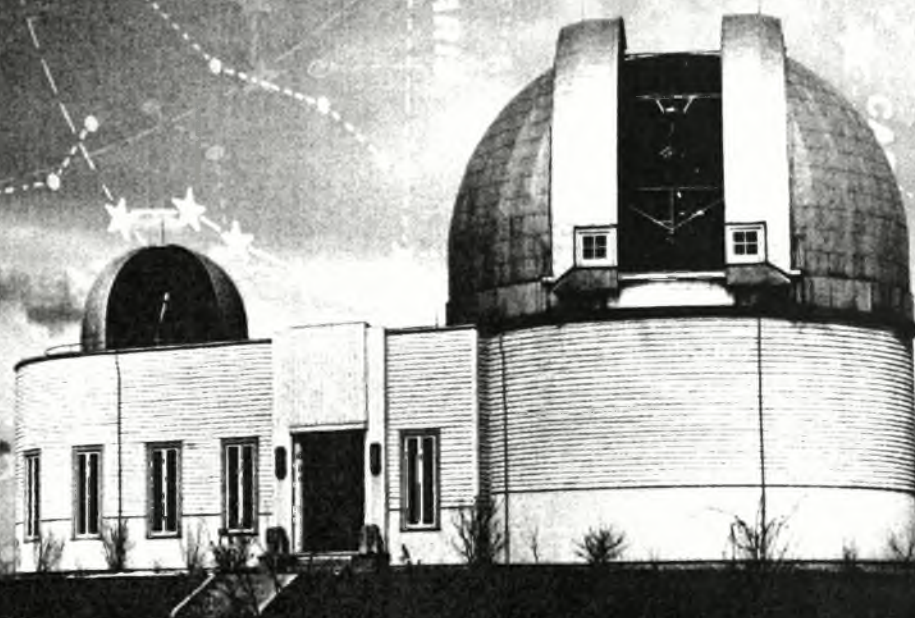
THE DOCTOR AND THE OBSERVATORY

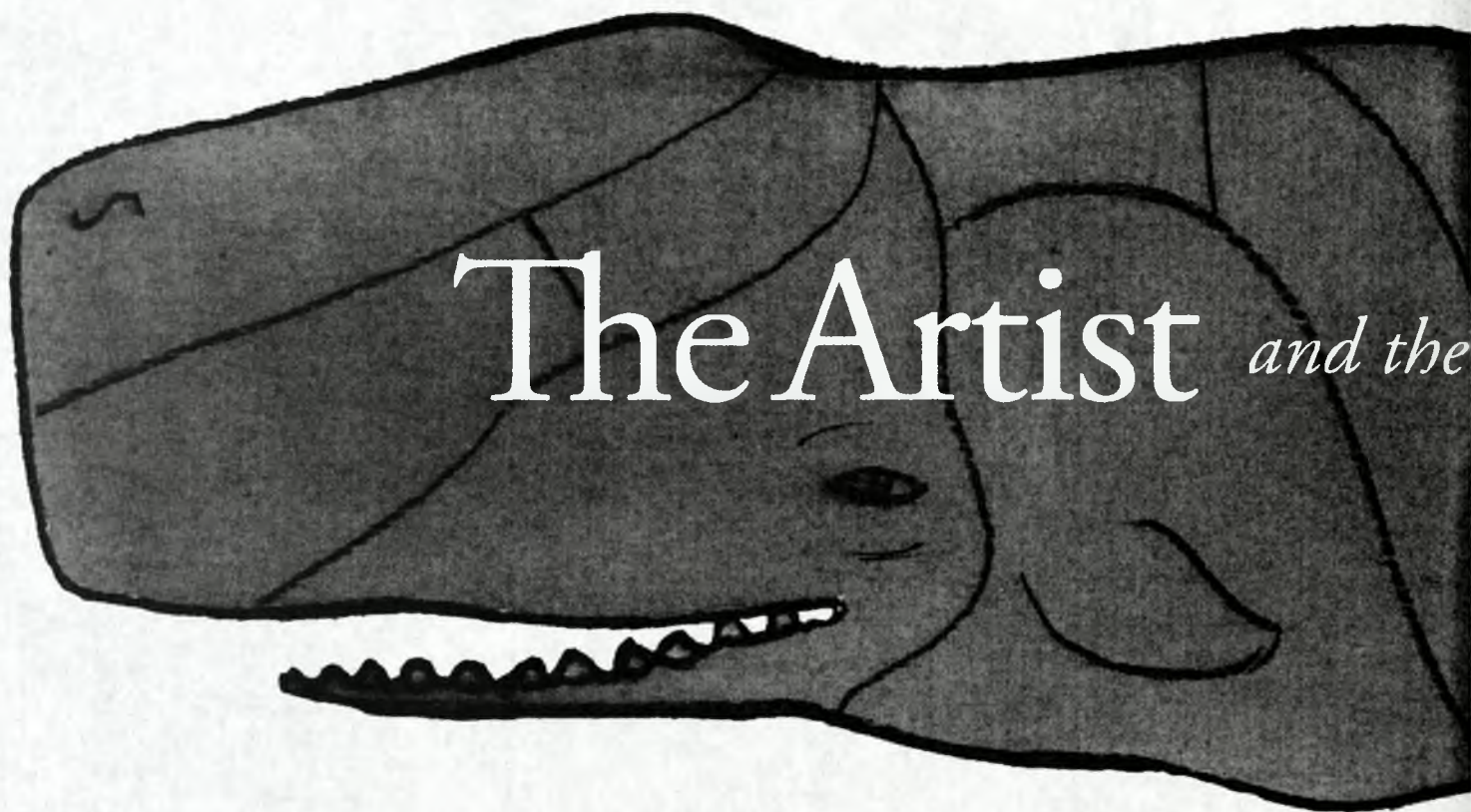
GILBERT WILSON'S
MOBY DICK

A HOOSIER WOMAN
AT WAR

EZRA POUND AT
WABASH COLLEGE

JOHN HUNT MORGAN
RIDES AGAIN





The Artist *and the*

EDWARD K. SPANN

Throughout his life, Terre Haute artist Gilbert Wilson had long accepted impoverished circumstances as the path to creative independence. His grandiose commitment to public art meant a dependence on those in power to grant him the walls on which to create his murals and the stage on which to mount his greatest dream—an opera based on Herman Melville’s classic novel *Moby Dick* (1851). Wilson, who had come to see *Moby Dick* as his Bible, had found some walls chiefly in schools for his murals, but his lack of influence and money prevented him from winning the stage of the Metropolitan Opera for his production titled “The White Whale.” As he was forced to recognize by 1951, there would be no production of the opera unless some miracle occurred.

Although he was prone to dream of miracles on occasion, Wilson began to search for alternative venues for his creation. He considered turning his work into a musical production or a play, but instead concentrated on film. The motion picture, he believed, could be a new and more dynamic version of a mural, and was potentially more effective in influencing the public. Some of the movies produced in the Soviet Union had demonstrated

how powerfully film could be used to express a radical message. “Motion pictures,” Wilson wrote in 1943 regarding Soviet films, “are an art form which makes me as a mural painter feel almost impotent.”

Wilson had long thought of adding filmmaking to his artistic repertoire. As early as 1938 he had written that he could see “great possibilities of broadening any social mural’s influence by filming it in color, moving the camera intimately over

the entire wall, showing part by part of the mural as a whole, all this done to music.”

In 1945 he began seriously to consider producing a film about juvenile delinquency, and he had written to several movie producers about the project. In asking for help from *Theater Arts* magazine, he discussed how it might be produced: “The rehabilitation side of the picture might very easily seem drab in comparison to the violence of delinquency. The problem might be met by making the first half of the film (the violent part) in plain black and white film, with the violence implied rather than depicted, and the latter half in color with plenty of fast action.” He had no success, but he kept on trying.

In 1947 a rising public concern over juvenile delinquency encouraged Wilson to consider getting support for the film, now titled “The Unwanted.” By this time, he had worked out two shooting scripts



IMAGES COURTESY SVOPE ART MUSEUM, TERRE HAUTE, INDIANA

for what he termed a “long short.” One script was barely more than an outline of a plot that culminated in a group of boys—black and white—building a music chapel. The other was a complete script that dealt with black, white, and Asian boys all forced to face the debilitating effects of their slum environment. Wilson hoped to persuade the popular movie actor, Eddie Albert, to serve as the narrator in order to attract financial support for the project. Again, nothing happened, perhaps in part because Wilson conceived of the film as dealing with black youth and with the problem of race relations, not popular subjects at the time.

Even before his hopes of making “The White Whale” as an opera began to fade, Wilson was thinking of presenting it as a movie, particularly as a musical drama on film. For a time, he evoked some interest in linking a production of the opera at

the Met to a filmed version, with hopes of using the prestige of the Met to engage the interest of a major film studio. He considered using the movie actor, Walter Huston, as Captain Ahab, an idea that soon brought him into contact with Huston’s son, John, the movie producer. In March 1949 Wilson wrote to Pearl S. Buck that he was hoping for a film from John Huston “independent thank heavens of Hollywood.” For a time, nothing was done, in large part because of confusion and conflict over who had the right to film *Moby Dick*.

In April, however, Wilson achieved something like a breakthrough, although it came in a typically complicated way. Beginning in 1947, as he tried to work out the visual elements of “The White Whale,” he began producing a series of drawings and paintings presenting his ideas regarding the characters and scenes of *Moby*

Dick. He created portraits of each major character in action along with the ship *Pequod* and the white whale, but he had his favorites. One was Pip, the copper-colored cabin boy, whose face in one instance he drew modeled on his own face as he looked into a mirror, one of several pictures including ones depicting the boy in a moment of terror—“a wide-eyed screaming face”—and in a moment of tenderness with his captain.

It was the character of Ahab, however, who appeared in roughly half of the paintings. In one picture, he depicted a “wild-hearted” Ahab and got excited: “I strain the damn muscles of my neck with the fury of my feelings trying to be Ahab as I draw.” He became even more involved with a series of paintings of the captain as “insanity personified,” observing that he was “beginning to get to that desired place where I work with the directness of a child.”

The pictures came easily, more than eighty of them in a six-month period. Although they initially flowed out of his enthusiasm for the opera, they soon acquired a separate importance, and Wilson began to think of exhibiting them. The cost of a gallery exhibition deferred any action until 1949 when his partner, Walt DeMott, a high school teacher, and Wilson's parents put up the \$700 needed to display one hundred of his *Moby Dick* paintings at the Newton art gallery on Fifty-seventh Street in New York. Author Buck and actor Walter Huston sponsored the exhibition. Wilson prepared the exhibition program, in which he declared that his works were an ordered "attempt at a dramatic synthesis of *Moby Dick*." He stated his thesis that the White Whale symbolized overwhelming power, "which bears disturbing resemblance in our time to the atomic bomb."

Even discounting Wilson's characteristic exaggerations, the exhibition proved to be a success, attracting enough people to justify its extension from ten to twenty-four days in May, beginning on the third. It was noticed by New York's major newspapers and by *Coronet Magazine*, which published pictures of six of the paintings. The paintings were not for sale, since

"I have been left out of the whole thing to the point of reducing my work to an absolute zero creatively."

at the time Wilson wanted to keep the collection intact as support for his larger projects, but he thought that the publicity assured the publication of all or most of his *Moby Dick* art in a volume that would yield profit as well as fame.

By the time it closed on May 27, the exhibition had given new life to Wilson's hopes for what in June he called "a film-music-drama collaboration." Early in May, he appealed to columnist Walter Lippman to provide his influential support for efforts to produce on an international basis a color film of *Moby Dick*. Lippman failed to respond, but Wilson's exhibition encouraged both Walter and John Huston to consider turning the novel into a film. The idea of making such a film was nothing new. Wilson said later that eight studios had options on Melville's novel, but it was John Huston who actually determined to produce such a film. Convinced that his pictures had opened the way for the development of the film, Wilson naturally expected to be involved. Like everything in his life, however, the making of the movie became complicated and frustrating.

By the early 1950s, the movie industry was disrupted both by the erupting competition of television and by right-wing efforts to ferret out radicals. For these and other reasons, the film faced delays, and when production actually got under way in 1953 it was done in England. Wilson expected to be invited to participate in the making of the film, and in December 1952 he believed that he had been appointed as its "production designer." He optimistically prepared a 250-page shooting script for a full-length movie to be shot partly in black and white and partly in Technicolor for a "giant screen." In its final form, he described it as "an impressive three volume affair" that he expected to influence Huston's production. Again, his creative enthusiasms ran at full speed. "This will be the greatest film ever made so far," he wrote to his friend, George Fulton. "I expect to get an 'oscar.'"

In fact, nothing immediate happened as further delays arose from the opposition of Hollywood unions. Work on the movie was put off until 1954, by which time the promise of becoming production designer had evaporated. Each time Wilson hinted that he would like to be involved, he was told that to use him meant getting around an English rule requiring that 80 percent of those involved in the film be British. Frustrated, he turned to a new strategy, prayer, in the hopes that if he prayed hard enough he could have an effect in producing action. Prayers, however, were no more successful than hints.

Still, Wilson had reason to expect that he would be at least consulted, since he had spent years devising ways of turning the book into a dynamic visual presentation. He thought briefly of becoming a British subject to qualify for a place in the

Captain Ahab's fury at the White Whale that destroyed his ship and took his leg is captured by Gilbert Wilson for the film he helped create based on Herman Melville's novel. Despite its less than stellar initial reviews, the book went on to become a classic in American literature.



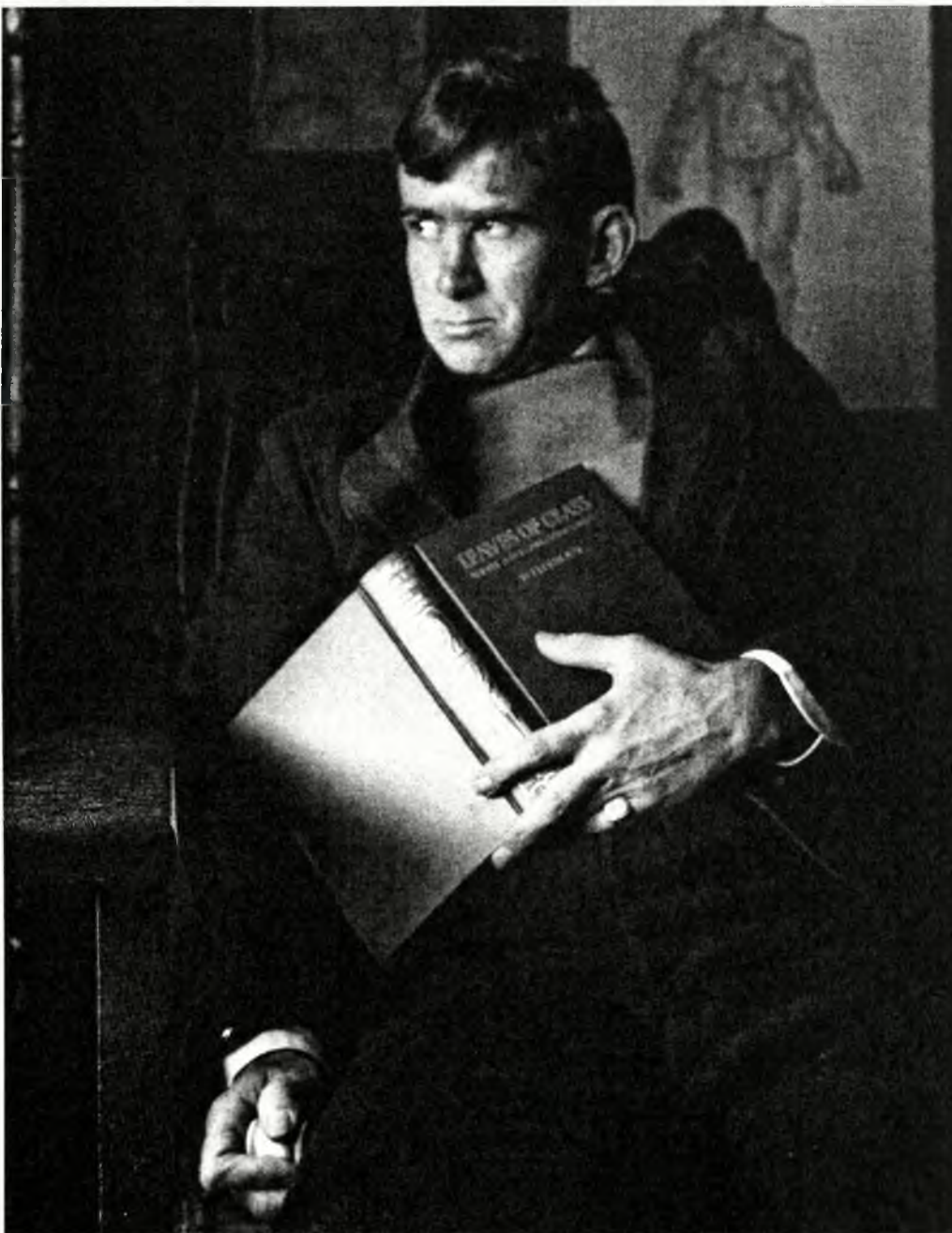
film. When he learned that Gregory Peck had been signed to play Ahab, he wrote to Huston gently criticizing Peck for not looking like his version of Ahab—more privately, he complained that the actor looked more like Abraham Lincoln than the heavyset tyrant that he imagined Ahab to be. He suggested that his own paintings might be used to help Huston better visualize the film. Prayers, complaints, and suggestions, however, seemed to vanish into the void, inciting him in August 1954 to seethe over “the way I have been left out of the whole thing to the point of reducing

my work to an absolute zero creatively.” The movie *Moby Dick*, eventually released in 1956 by Warner Brothers, was John Huston’s film and not Wilson’s.

Typically, Wilson responded to the long period of inactivity in his relationship with Hollywood by pursuing other avenues. At some point, he finished a thirty-eight page reading script for an audiotope of his version of the novel. In 1951, the centennial year of *Moby Dick*’s publication, he successfully exhibited his paintings on Nantucket, selling eight of his works, more than he anticipated or even

wanted, and followed this up with other exhibitions at Williams College and at Princeton University. Nantucket especially contributed to what he called a banner year, “my drawings so adequately displayed in the historic atmosphere of a whaling warehouse.” In January Wilson scored another triumph when Harvard University exhibited sixteen of his drawings. The exhibitions encouraged him to make new drawings for the *Moby Dick* series, including a new set portraying Ahab’s developing insanity, each portrait measuring twenty-four feet by thirty inches, a larger size than his previous work.

In 1952 Wilson published his fully developed ideas regarding the basic meaning of Melville’s novel in an article, “*Moby Dick* and the Atom,” published in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. The article began with Wilson’s observation that, whatever their differences, artists and scientists had the “same goal—something called truth.” To make his point, he included a map of the Pacific Ocean that located the sinking of the *Pequod* near the Bikini atoll where atomic scientists had chosen to test their nuclear bombs. *Moby Dick*, he declared, could be read as touching on the critical problems of the twentieth century, including a willful modern individualism and white imperialistic domination of darker races, which directly



Wilson relaxes with one of his favorite authors, Walt Whitman. In 1930 Wilson produced a “Credo for Life” in which he asked an unspecified creator to keep him from doing anything that would “desecrate this life you gave to me” and promising “To bear myself erect, hold my head / And bow it not to taunting scorn or praise / But look into the future, there to discern / The hand that beckons toward untrodden ways.”



From THE Story
of "MOBY-DICK"

GW

and indirectly led to the greatest problem of all—man's relationship to the natural world on which he depended.

At the same time he was completing his version of what he considered a deeply tragic book, Wilson also attempted to find a way to express that version in a work of art. Sometime in the early 1950s, he put down many of his ideas in his "Notes and Ideas for a Film of MOBY DICK." Here he gave some thought not only to the music but also to background sounds, to "wave—wind—gently groaning timbers," and to the use of colors to establish the prevailing mood from scene to scene. He gave thought to the costuming, dressing the crew with colorful clothing at the beginning and then in drabness as they fall under Ahab's domination. The White Whale posed a special problem. After considering ways merely to suggest Moby Dick's malevolent power, he envisioned a hundred-foot model made out of light plastic, instructing himself to avoid making it totally realistic for fear it would detract from the film's humanity.

The ideas for an independent film were there, and so were the basic visual materials in the form of the now more than two hundred drawings and paintings relating to the White Whale story. Using them meant abandoning the idea of a full-length feature film, but Wilson was prepared to accept something shorter. In 1947 his friend and fellow Hoosier Charles Millholland warned him that Hollywood was controlled by money and not by art with the result that "prostitution" summed up its character. He advised Wilson that for progressive and creative minds the way to escape the domination of money was to resort to shorter 16 millimeter films, like the ones that some labor unions were producing.

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Millholland also recommended a possible director for such a film in a mutual acquaintance, Jerry Weinstein, recently renamed Jerry Winters after some plastic surgery. Wilson had met Winters when the latter was a student at Antioch College, recommending him in 1939 to Lotte Jacobi and Alfred Stieglitz as a promising young photographer who would someday concentrate on the motion picture. By the early 1950s Winters had become involved in producing short films, especially for television.

Finally, in the summer of 1951, Wilson and Winters began to put together a film in New York. Abandoning any thought of a realistic presentation with real actors and scenes, they worked on a film using Wilson's paintings and drawings. They were encouraged by the new popularity of short art films, which at the time were shown in the more sophisticated movie theaters. Originally, Wilson thought of simply filming himself as an artist showing his works. He proposed to Winters that he be filmed explaining what he had done "in the stumbling halting manner of unrehearsed and extemporaneous speaking. This expounding will be skillfully relieved by exciting camera work [and] music and well-spoken passages of text."

Wilson soon dropped this clumsy approach in favor of using his works to tell his version of the story of Moby Dick, a decision that soon encouraged him to create some new paintings especially intended for filming. By November he was writing



ABOVE: At the age of thirty, Wilson accepted his homosexuality, deciding to channel his feelings into his creative works. From his newfound understanding, he hoped to create "a great mural with a theme of sex and love, and in it try to express all the tragedy and frustration and suffering that results from ignorance and stupidity toward sex problems." OPPOSITE: Captain Ahab hurls his harpoon at the White Whale. Melville based his tale in part on the sinking of the whaling ship Essex, sunk in 1820 after being rammed by an eighty-ton sperm whale.



Wilson's art for his film version received a nationwide audience thanks to Warner Brothers, which paid him to conduct a lecture tour using slides of his work as a way to promote director John Huston's 1956 movie *Moby Dick*. Speaking in public sometimes unnerved the artist. He admitted in his journal: "Talking is so difficult. ... I cannot begin—nor do I dare—to admit how afraid I am." Wilson later noted that trying to make himself heard over "the roar of the projector makes my head split like Ahab's."

to a friend that he was “having a great time executing large drawings, both sketchy and detailed—resorting to my early use of pastels and chalks, etc.—making those larger drawings over which the color camera can roam and move with revealing and exciting effectiveness.” One of the large drawings, he told a fellow Melville enthusiast, Howard Vincent, featured the great whale itself, “his hideous jaw relaxed and the eye glowing like a smoldering coal.” Before long, Wilson and Winters had created a shooting script and a storyboard complete with small thumbnail sketches indicating where the paintings were to be used.

Nearly half of the scenes had something to do with Wilson’s thesis that the story involved the power of the atom. These included an “atomic explosion” featuring blinding flashes of light from which the White Whale emerges and, in a bit of self-publicizing, a shot of Wilson’s article in the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* with his map of Bikini atoll. His intention was to produce a controversial film dealing with “Man and the Atom or Man versus Destruction” that would excite public alarm over the dangers inherent in humanity’s careless use of nature’s power.

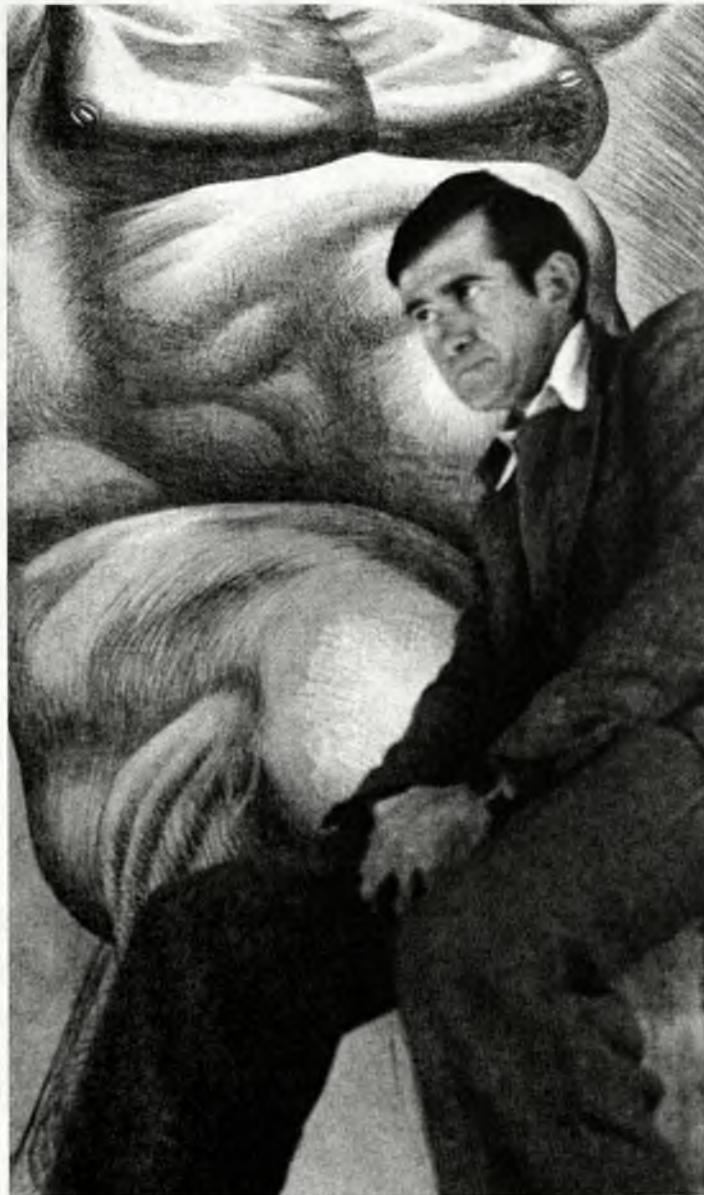
Wilson, however, soon learned that even in an independent film the artist does not entirely get his way. During the first few months of production, he was, as usual, optimistic in his assessments of the film’s progress, predicting that it would be done by March 1952. By that date, however, he and Winters had completed only a rough twelve-minute section, and it was evident that they faced a hard road ahead. Having painted many of his scenes in vertical form, Wilson had to rework them to fit the standard horizontal rectangle of film in order to avoid distracting blank areas. And there was the problem about deciding on a narrator to complement the visual line and also a composer for the music.

Hovering above all was the ever-pres-

ent problem of money. Although the film was inexpensive by Hollywood standards, costing less than \$20,000, neither Wilson nor Winters had anything like that amount of money to pay the skilled cameramen and other technicians needed to make a presentable color short. Winters contributed his expertise and also some of the money, part of which he borrowed from his family, but that fell short of what they needed. Wilson soon became wary of relying on Winters to supply the needed funds, fearing that this would give the director control over the film. Wilson tried

without success to gain funding from the Ford Foundation. By September 1952 he wrote to Van Wyck Brooks that filming was going slowly. “The costs increase and increase—and I cringe each time, because I know it means more and more concessions to my collaborator,” wrote Wilson. By then, it was becoming evident that while Wilson wanted to make a great art film conveying his message, Winters wanted a commercially profitable film that would at least return his investment.

Despite all these difficulties, Wilson and Winters completed the film in 1954.



Although Wilson worked like a demon for years on his art, he never achieved the success he dreamed of. He wrote in his journal of his worry that he had not achieved anything that would allow him to say “I have done this & it will survive.” He later wrote a friend: “I have painted 12 public murals, my name is in ‘Who’s Who in American Art,’ my work is mentioned in four art books, yet I am down right ashamed of never having earned enough to pay an income tax at age 47.”

The artist grumbled that this lack of attention had been guaranteed by Winters's decision to omit nearly a hundred of his drawings and the scenes they expressed, dooming it to the status of a "short" film that critics habitually ignored.



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: *Wilson's dramatic renditions of Melville's tale of life on the high seas earned praise from the author's relatives. Eleanor Melville Metcalf, Melville's granddaughter, declared that she was deeply impressed by the power of Wilson's paintings, which seemed to indicate that "the artist had been tossed from a whaleboat himself."*

As director, Winters used Wilson's paintings to good effect in depicting the *Pequod* and its crew and the world of whaling. The film comes to a focus on Ahab, who is introduced by one painting in which Wilson tried his best to depict the power and willfulness of the captain as he stands on the bridge of his ship. The camera moves across Ahab's body, making special note of the ivory stump that replaced the leg that the White Whale had taken. Even with dramatic music, however, Wilson's effort does not completely succeed in elevating Ahab to the command of a tragic ship of doom, a notable weakness in a film that treats the story as a great modern myth. Similarly, he had trouble fully depicting the terrible power of Moby Dick.

Overall, Winters produced a good art film that demonstrated how adroit camera movement could add life to a sequence of

still shots, approximating Wilson's dream of using film to add a dynamic dimension to his murals. This work featured a dramatic narration by veteran actor, Thomas Mitchell, whose services were obtained after much searching for a big name with the right voice. Everyone agreed it was a

well-made film with a high degree of what Wilson called "professional fidelity and technical finish."

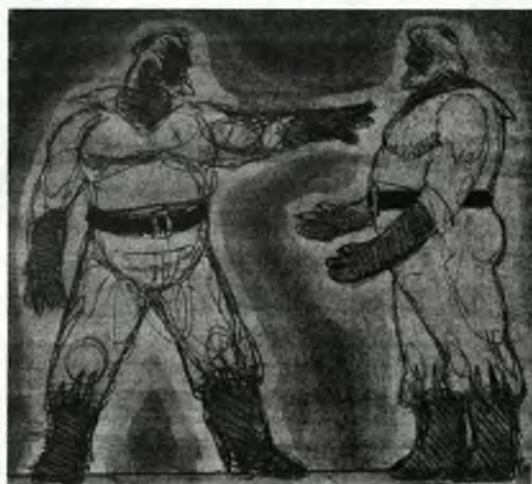
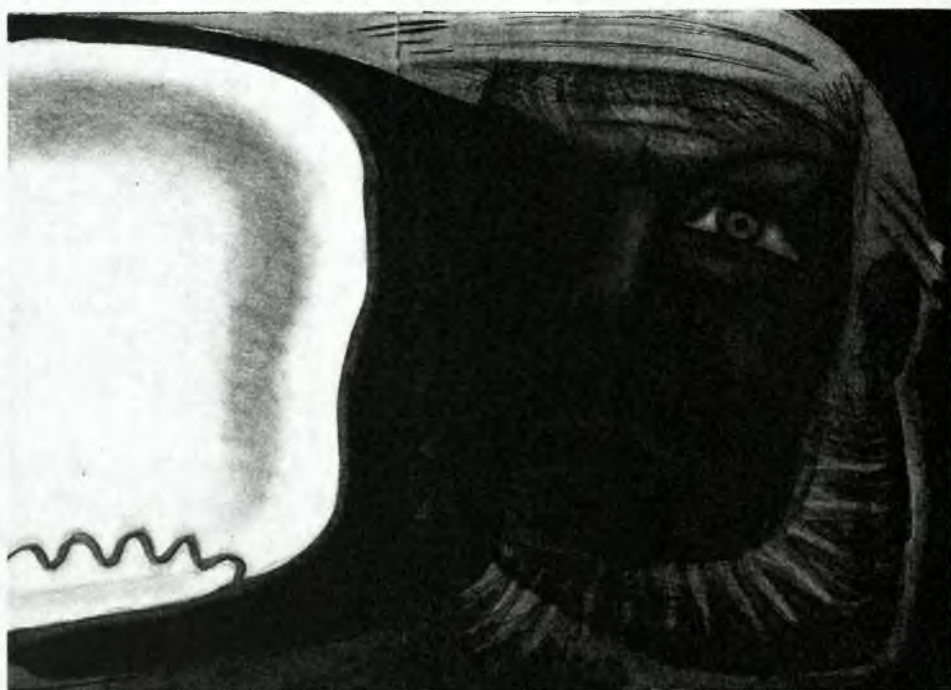
Wilson, however, was unhappy with what he saw as a failure to present his basic ideas. In December he blasted Winters for sacrificing the deeper meaning of Melville's novel to hopes for commercial success: "The picture is not daring enough, Jerry."

The director had turned what Wilson called Melville's "wicked book" into a mere adventure story. Despite repeated urgings, the director had in fact ignored his efforts to treat the novel as an anticipatory warning against the atom bomb and did not include the drawing of an atomic mushroom cloud that Wilson wanted displayed after Moby Dick had sunk the *Pequod*. Winters also left out what the irate artist considered a key political point—that Melville intended the ship to be a microcosm of an America doomed by its own arrogant disregard for nature. Although Wilson welcomed the film's release in May 1955, he decided to attend a national scout meeting in Washington, D.C., instead of attending the movie's premiere at the Paris Theater on Twenty-third Street in New York. The premier was announced by a promotional flyer, which included the endorsements of various well-known people, including Louis Untermeyer, who declared it "a great short worthy of a great book."

This showing, however, brought the usual disappointment, failing to catch the attention of the New York critics and disappearing quickly from the commercial movie circuit after nine weeks at the Paris Theater and another showing at the Kismet Theater in Hollywood. It received only one review, that in *Commonweal*, whose movie critic did praise it as "providing a thrilling experience," thanks in large part to Wilson's "stunning drawings." The artist grumbled that this lack of attention had been guaranteed by Winters's decision to omit nearly a hundred of his drawings and the scenes they expressed, dooming it to the status of a "short" film that critics habitually ignored.

There was a good side, however, to these showings, as meager as they were. Despite his complaints, Wilson took pride in the film, especially when he could report that his partner, DeMott, was so





Although in his work Wilson took some interest in the Pequod's crew—giving special attention to its multiracial character—Captain Ahab dominated his imagination. Wilson saw Ahab as the evil version of his own ideal of attractive manhood. "Huge, rugged, heavy-set, iron-gray hair," Wilson wrote in 1949, "Ahab is an entirely believable blend of furious tyranny and tender gentleness."

pleased with the film that he cried. On occasion, the two men sat on the steps of a nearby fountain to watch people lining up at the theater—the crowds were there to see the popular feature attraction, *The Great Adventure*, but Wilson could take some satisfaction that perhaps as many as fifteen thousand people had seen his work. Moreover, Winters's conservative direction paid off in that the film was selected from some 120 short films as an entry in the Venice Film Festival and won a second place Silver Reel award. It was also selected by the U.S. Information Services to be shown in Europe as an American film of distinction.

Wilson was especially pleased when he was invited to a showing of his work at an October 1955 "filmfest" in his native Terre Haute, where the movie was seen by some two hundred people. His return as a celebrity was mildly depressing. His parents had moved from the city to Kentucky, and he felt that his hometown had become commonplace and dirty. "I feel a stranger," he wrote in his journal, "from far off." It was not long, however, before he felt more comfortable, finding a favorable reception that led him to wonder whether his school murals might have had something of their intended effect on a new generation of Terre Hauteans. At a luncheon held by the Chamber of Commerce in his honor, he listened to Professor William T. Thurman declare that his murals at Woodrow Wilson Junior High School marked the biggest art event in the community's history.

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In January 1956 Wilson received an invitation to lecture, to exhibit some of his Moby Dick drawings, and to show his film at the Virginia Museum in Richmond. His visit in February was a triumph, marked not only by audience enthusiasm but also by a request that the museum be allowed to circulate his drawings throughout the schools and colleges of Virginia. The museum's newsletter praised the film as being "virtually a new art form." Wilson told his nephew Allen Morrison that he had never felt as successful, being particularly warmed by the reception of his lecture on *Moby Dick* as a story of "love as against hate." A month later, impressed by his film, the Indiana State Teachers College (today Indiana State University) in Terre Haute held an exhibition of his Moby Dick paintings. The chairman of the college's art department wrote that it was "one of the most successful that we have had here at the gallery. You feel its power when you walked into the room."

These small triumphs did little to keep Wilson from dreaming about bigger successes. He continued to hope that he

might revise and expand his film into a full-length feature that would include the suppressed themes, making it perhaps a contender for an Academy Award and more certainly the controversial "wicked" film that he wanted. He also held steadily to his "greatest aim," the production of his opera "The White Whale," as a drama with music by Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich. Such an international partnership, Wilson believed, might help end the cold war and ultimately unify mankind. "I will never cease to see Moby-Dick as a catalyst," Wilson wrote in his journal in May 1954, "for welding one small link in the world's oneness."

The late Edward K. Spann was professor emeritus of history at Indiana State University. He previously explored Wilson's artwork in an article that appeared in the winter 2002 issue of Traces. The Sheldon Swope Art Museum is sponsoring an exhibition of Wilson's work titled Gilbert Wilson: Native Son. The exhibition will be at the museum, 25 South Seventh Street, Terre Haute, through December 29, 2007.

FOR FURTHER READING Gilbert Wilson's journals, correspondence, and other material on his life can be found in the collection of the Vigo County Public Library, Terre Haute, Indiana. | Melville, Herman. *Moby Dick; or, The Whale*. 1851. Reprint, New York: Modern Library, 1992. | Parker, Hershel. *Herman Melville: A Biography*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.